



North Bend: How our 100 years began

Native Americans have resided in the area now known as North Bend for thousands of years. This land, later known as the Snoqualmie Prairie, was the eastern home to the Snoqualmie Tribe. The Snoqualmies lived in the Snoqualmie River drainage from the Cascade foothills in the upper valley to the confluence of the Snoqualmie and the Skykomish Rivers at Monroe. During recorded history, the tribe had an upper river band and a lower river band, divided by the Tolt River. The upper Snoqualmies fished in the river and gathered crayfish and freshwater mussels. They hunted deer, elk and mountain goats, and gathered berries and edible root plants. They relied on traditional fishing areas below Snoqualmie Falls and on trade with the lower band to obtain salmon. The upper Snoqualmies would maintain the prairie areas of the valley by periodically burning the valley floor to keep the forest at bay and encourage camas, ferns, wild onions and other roots to grow. The clear demarcation between prairie and forest made it easier to hunt game.

One of the first explorers to the Snoqualmie Valley was Samuel Hancock who arrived in 1851. Hancock came up river with his Snoqualmie Indian guides, carrying canoes around the falls to reach Snoqualmie Prairie, searching for coal deposits. He was taken to a “very extensive and fertile prairie” about two miles above Snoqualmie Falls. Hancock wrote in his journal in 1851, *“...This land cannot be surpassed, in any country, for grazing and agricultural purposes; this prairie proper I should think was five miles long, with perhaps an average breadth of a mile and a half, and...with this beautiful little branch of the river flowing through it, pure and sparkling right from the mountains close by.* The beautiful open grassland came to be known as the Snoqualmie Prairie; the heart of which we now know as Tollgate and Meadowbrook farms.

In 1853 when Washington and Oregon were recognized as two separate entities, Congress saw a need for a transcontinental railroad, and

authorized surveys of the land to find potential routes over Snoqualmie Pass. During the “Indian Wars” of 1855 and 56, in order to address unrest from Eastern Washington Tribes, Major J.H.H. Van Bokkelen brought soldiers to the valley to explore, map, and, if necessary, blockade Snoqualmie and Yakima Passes. A series of four small forts were constructed along the approach to the pass; Fort Patterson was sited near present day Fall City, Fort Tilton, about one mile downstream from the falls, Fort Alden, on the western end of the prairie above the falls at Meadowbrook, and Fort Smalley, near the ford across the South Fork on the present-day Tollgate. Although some gunfire was exchanged between militia members and Indians on two brief occasions, an attack across the pass never materialized, and by the fall of 1856 the forts were abandoned.

Two years later, in the summer of 1858, Jeremiah Borst arrived as the first permanent Euroamerican valley resident. He took the Fort Alden blockhouse at the present-day town of Meadowbrook (annexed to Snoqualmie in 1955) as his home and began to farm. His energy and entrepreneurial spirit fueled many business ventures and partnerships. Arriving before any official land surveys, Borst pre-empted 160 acres of land including the area now covered by Mount Si High. He farmed the land and planted a large apple orchard. Mr. Borst later arranged to claim another 160 acres and bought 360 more and eventually he owned over 900 acres in the valley. Borst participated in many business ventures, from mining and lumber mill interests to starting a meat-packing company.

After the Homestead Act of 1862 more settlers came to the Valley, and some of the first families settled near Borst on the easterly end of Snoqualmie Prairie. In 1865 Matts Peterson was the first person to homestead on the site of North Bend, which was later sold to Borst in 1879.

Jeremiah Borst eventually sold most of his Meadowbrook property to the Hop Grower’s Association in 1882. The house and barn were initially used as living quarters for the Association’s workers. The Association built barns, drying kilns, a trading post, rooming house, cook house and eventually, the Hop Ranch Hotel.

Following the sale of his Meadowbrook property Borst built a new house for his family on the farm at the Tollgate and built a second house for his

nephew. The building served multiple purposes including toll house, stores and hotel. In 1889 the railroad connected North Bend and Snoqualmie to Seattle, crossing the western edge of the Tollgate property and ending at Sallal Prairie, just east of North Bend.

In 1880 Borst wrote a letter to William Taylor asking him to take over the Patterson farm. Taylor agreed and in 1880 came to North Bend and became the driving force in developing the town. Taylor expanded his home to include a trading post and boarding house for people that were traveling over the pass. The Taylors lived on the farm for 6 years, eventually building their own home and buying more land.

In 1889, with the advent of the railroad, Taylor platted a town on part of his farm, drew streets and building lots, and gave it the name "Snoqualmie Prairie Acres". He filed the plat in February of 1889 and then took a trip to California.

While Taylor was away, developers platted another town downstream and named it "Snoqualmie Falls". Confusion over the similarity in the names caused the railroad to briefly re-name-Taylor's town site "Mountain View". This was soon changed to "North Bend" because the South Fork of the Snoqualmie took a bend to the north just outside of the planned downtown. The downriver town of Snoqualmie Falls almost immediately went through a name change as people quickly dropped the "Falls" from the name.

The first train arrived in 1889, bringing with it tourists and settlers. In 1892, the town had a hotel, saloon, cobbler's shop, bank, and general store.

In 1898 when prospectors returned home from the Yukon Gold Rush, they found gold all along the Wagon Road that crossed Snoqualmie Pass. In 1899, the Legislature saw the benefit of improving the Wagon Road and supplied government funding for the project. In 1905, two cars made the trip over the Pass and by 1909 the total number of cars to cross the Pass was 105.

In 1909, the City of North Bend was incorporated and Peter J. Maloney, a local entrepreneur served as the first mayor.

Sources:

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All the Good Land, A Heritage Supplement of the Snoqualmie Valley Reporter, Wednesday, March 24, 1993

City of North Bend website, <http://ci.north-bend.wa.us/citydepartmentss/parkandrec/tollgatefarm>

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